



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Coast Guard Issues Low Water Advisory, Responds to Grounding

ST. LOUIS – The Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) St. Louis, in conjunction with the COTP Paducah, Ky., issued a safety advisory today, due to falling water levels on the Upper Mississippi River. The advisory covers 185 miles of the river from Cairo, Ill., to the Port of St. Louis. The advisory, which was developed with input from the River Industry Action Committee (RIAC) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, requests that all north bound tows be limited to a total of 24 barges, configured six long by four wide. Within this tow configuration, the number of loaded barges is restricted to 15. Loaded barges are requested to be configured five long by 3 wide. The advisory also requests that all southbound tows be limited to a total of 20 barges, with the heaviest barges placed to the rear and center of the tow. The advisory further advises that all barges be loaded to a draft of not more than eight feet, six inches. The advisory will remain in effect until conditions warrant change.

The Upper Mississippi River stage, as read from the St. Louis gauge this morning, was -3.8 and is forecasted by the National Weather Service, St. Louis, to continue falling.

Investigators from Marine Safety Office St. Louis are responding to the grounding of the tow of the WALTER E. BLESSEY, at mile marker 196, near Hartford, Ill., today. Shortly before noon the operator of the WALTER E. BLESSEY reported that the three-barge tow of the vessel was aground. Preliminary reports indicate the lead barge of the tow, which is reported to be loaded with ethanol, remains aground. The other two barges, reported to be loaded with benzene, are reported to be afloat. No injuries or pollution have been reported in connection with the grounding.

The cause of the grounding is under investigation.

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